

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-2004

January 26, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I want to applaud your State of the Union Address that made investment in infrastructure a critical part of making America competitive and for creating good-paying jobs today and into the future. Our roads, rails, ports, power grids, broadband networks and airports form the foundation of our daily lives and our economy allowing individuals to get to work and goods to get to market. But in encouraging this renewed attention to our nation's critical networks, I urge you not to forget our nation's drinking and wastewater infrastructure.

The water infrastructure we rely on as a nation is reaching a tipping point. In many places, if not most places, it has long outlived its fifty-year life span. The American Society of Civil Engineers has given America's wastewater infrastructure a "D minus" in its most recent report. There are an estimated 700 water main breaks a day in this nation. These breaks are more than an inconvenience; they can also endanger the health and safety of our citizens as well as disrupt economic activity and our national security.

We have seen the impact of our failing water infrastructure all too often in my home state of Maryland. Every year there are thousands of water main breaks, large and small, across the state. In 2008, we saw River Road in Bethesda turned into a literal river requiring motorists be rescued by helicopters and boats. In October 2009, a thousand basements in Dundalk Maryland were under water. In March 2010 thousands more homes and businesses along a major thoroughfare in Baltimore County were left without water. And just yesterday in Prince George's County, a burst water main shot water 8 feet in the air, flooding businesses, overturning parked cars, shutting down a segment of the Beltway and federal facilities such as the U.S. Census Bureau and Andrews Air Force Base, and prompting a boil advisory for Marylanders in the area.

These episodes and statistics remind us that the water infrastructure in this country is in dire straits and is in desperate need of new attention and greater investment. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that more than \$630 billion will be needed over the next 20 years to meet the nation's water and wastewater infrastructure needs.

We also know that an increased investment in infrastructure has benefits beyond the quality of our water, additional benefits that are particularly important in these economic times.

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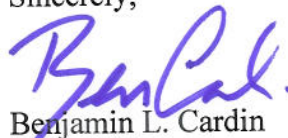
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With investment in water infrastructure we can create thousands of new, desperately needed jobs. Infrastructure investment in water systems has one of the highest job creation potentials when compared across other broad categories of public infrastructure investment. Over the long-term, the U.S. Conference of Mayors recently found that one dollar of water and sewer infrastructure investment increases Gross Domestic Product by over \$6 and every job in water and sewer infrastructure creates over 3 additional jobs in the national economy to support that job. And in another survey, industrial and agricultural businesses rank reliable water as their second most valued service after electricity.

I have had no greater priority throughout my career than ensuring Marylanders and all Americans have the opportunity to secure a better life for themselves and their families and that includes a good-paying job as well as reliable access to clean, safe water. By investing in water infrastructure, we can make progress toward both. For that reason, I urge you to include water in your six-year plan for infrastructure investment. I look forward to working with you to ensure America's water infrastructure, along with its ports, roads, rails and other critical networks are the envy of the world and we have the infrastructure in place we need to win the future.

Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

BLC:sg